

committed by practice to the ideomotor machinery, and not infrequently fails in executing them. A fit of consciousness may unnerve the fingers of a skilled pianist, and make an orator forget his sentences. But however deeply we may probe it, however minutely we may analyse it, consciousness remains an insoluble enigma. We speak of it as an instrument. But does it not appear to be ourselves ? It is from one point of view the microscope, from another the microscopist. It is aware of itself. To materialistic philosophers it may appear to have sprung from some strange fermentation in the vessel of Life, but it soars aloft, like the genius of the Arabian tale, overshadows its vessel and critically examines it. By many it has been identified with the human soul. But the genius may be reimprisoned by sleep, by intoxication or by a fit of passion : it will vanish before a slight concussion of the brain : hypnotic influence affects it strangely. It has the powers of a magician ; but it is as unstable as a dream.

§

If we can believe that each nerve-cell may develop a rudimentary feeling or consciousness of its own, we may arrive at some explanation, indefinite though it be, of the power of the brain to apprehend the memories and thoughts which stream through it. How are these intangible shadows brought within the grasp of consciousness ? By, we may suppose, sympathetic

and
reciprocal action of the " awareness"
of the
nerve-cells, which communicates to one
cell the
happenings in another without need of
any special
transmitting machinery. And if nerve-
cells, in
virtue of their inherent " awareness,"
can com-
municate with one another they can
communicate
across space ; for within the cavity of
the skull